

**Testimony of Pat Ianni, submitted to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
of the 132nd Maine Legislature (2nd session)**
in Support of LD 2141 –
***An Act to Direct a Portion of Unclaimed Beverage Container Deposits to the Lake Water
Quality Restoration and Protection Fund and the Maine Working Farmland Access and
Protection Program (as amended by Senator Brenner's proposed amendment)***
February 4, 2026

Good morning, Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Pat Ianni and I am a resident of Falmouth. I am a retired environmental scientist and, as such, I spent almost 40 years working in the area of hazardous waste investigations and regulatory compliance. I would like to encourage your support of LD 2141, as amended by Senator Stacy Brenner's proposed amendment dated 1/29/2026.

As you know, this bill will allocate \$2 million each (\$4 million total) annually to the *Lake Water Quality Protection and Restoration Fund* and the *Maine Working Farmland Access and Protection Program*. I speak to you today in support of this bill and, in particular, for the funding it will provide for the improvement and protection of the water quality of our Maine lakes.

My education and career have taught me the benefits served to our broader environment by protecting our Maine lakes, including the underlying and surrounding soils, groundwater, surface waters, and watersheds. Additionally, I have lived on Highland Lake in Falmouth for over a quarter of a century and have come to appreciate the need for this type of environmental protection. Without protection of the health of our lakes, our groundwater, and all our downgradient ecosystems can suffer from unintended adverse impacts; these downstream receptors include not only the streams and rivers our lakes discharge into, but also our coastal and marine environments that receive our lake discharges. For example, the water quality of Highland Lake ultimately impacts the underlying groundwater aquifer which many people in the area rely on as the only available drinking water source where public water infrastructure is not available. Additionally, the quality of our lakes, such as Highland Lake, can have a significant impact (positive or negative) on the water discharging into Casco Bay. Thus, lake protection plays an integral part in protecting the larger ecosystems that make Maine such a desired place to live (for humans and all living creatures).

The necessary work to protect our lake ecosystems costs money and this bill would allow the funding of this work from a portion of Maine's unclaimed beverage container deposits. Without this legislation, these unclaimed deposits (an estimated \$10 to \$17 million) would otherwise be returned to the bottling industry, but this is public money that should be used to serve the public good. The Lake

Water Quality Protection and Restoration Fund, codified in 38 MRSA § 480-N and housed within the MEDEP, was established to support water quality. Ultimately, these unclaimed beverage container deposits can be used as a sustained funding mechanism to support the completion of watershed surveys, erosion mitigation, alum treatments, research, public education and more. This funding can also be used to support the application for matching grants by communities and lake associations.

Ultimately, the use of these funds for lake water quality restoration and protection exemplifies the intended purpose of the beverage container redemption law as eloquently expressed by Maine's Senator Edmund Muskie in 1976 when he stated on the floor of the U.S. Senate: *"It is a needed step to assist in developing a 'conservation ethic' that rejects waste and embraces thrift, husbandry, and saving part of the Earth's abundance for our posterity"*. I can't think of a better use of these 'bottle bill' proceeds than in protecting the water quality of our Maine lakes. Without this annual source of funding, there is no guarantee this much needed work can continue. I urge you to pass this bill as amended.